WW2 New Mexico Aircraft Accidents

Our Country lost a lot of good young men to aircraft accidents before they even got to combat!

Why So Many Aviation Accidents in WW2?

To Quote Anthony J. Mireles (Author) from his Book **Fatal Army Air Forces Aviation Accidents in the United States, 1941-1945**

“During World War II, the air over the continental United States was a virtual third front. The little-known statistics are alarming: the Army Air Forces lost more than 4,500 aircraft in combat against Japanese army and naval air forces in the war. During the same time, the AAF lost more than 7,100 aircraft in the United States to accidents in training and transportation. Such accidents claimed the lives of more than 15,530 pilots, crewmembers and ground personnel, and the stories of their deaths are largely forgotten.”

Source: https://www.amazon.com/Forces-Aviation-Accidents-United-1941-1945/dp/0786421061

Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs)
National Archives

Typically, a MACR gives some or all of the following kinds of information about each crew member:

- Name
- Rank
- Service number
- Crew position
- name and address of next of kin

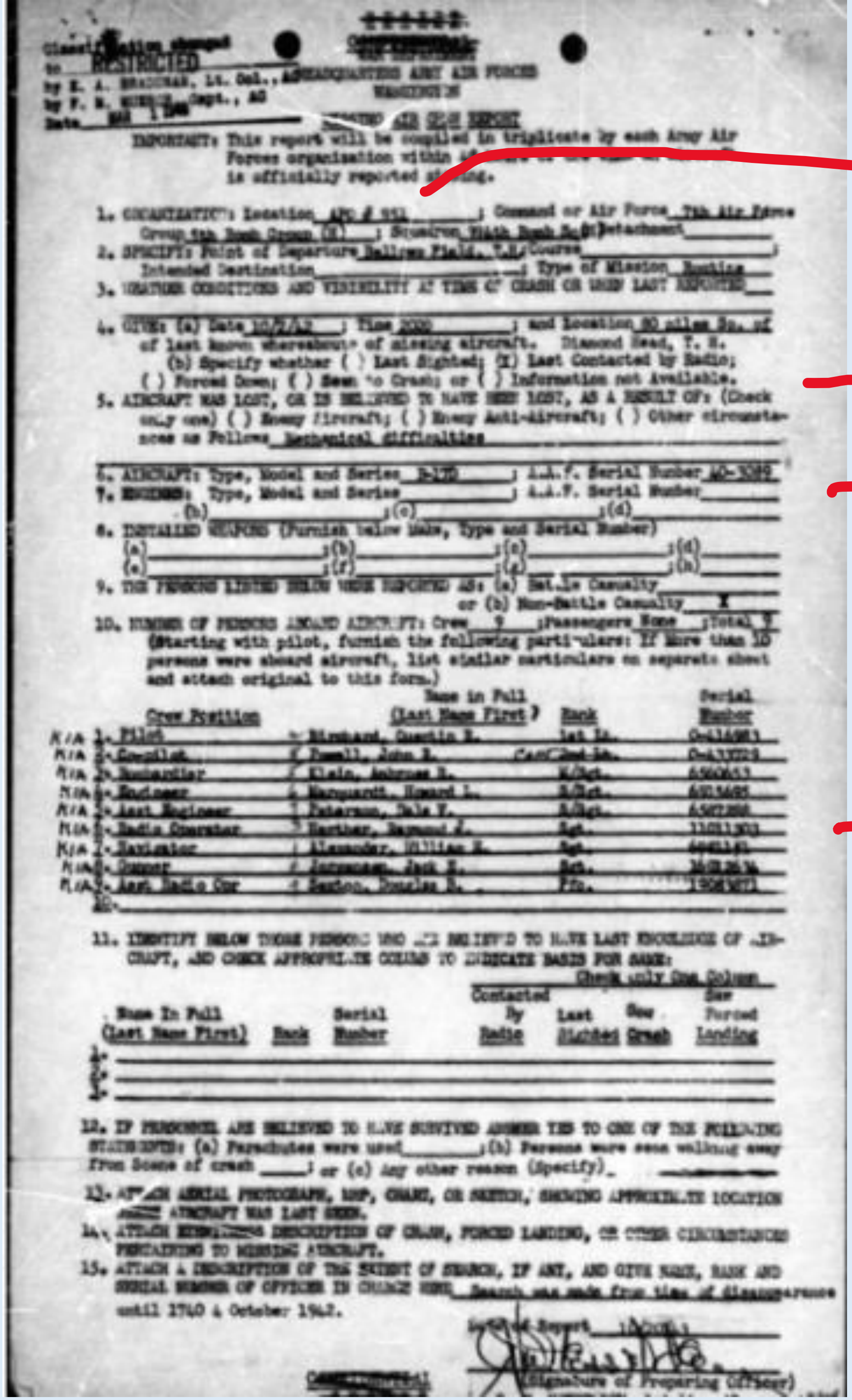
MACRs

The report also usually indicates the following:

- Army Air Forces organization to which the aircraft was assigned
- Place of departure and destination of the flight plan
- Weather conditions and visibility at the time of loss
- Cause of crash
- Type, model, and serial number of the aircraft and its engines
- Kinds of weapons installed and their serial numbers

Some reports include the names of persons with some knowledge of the aircraft's last flight. In some cases these are rescued or returned crew members. Most reports do not contain all of the above information, especially those prepared in 1943 and in 1947. The National Archives holds digitized copies of the MACR name index and the many of the air crew reports, both of which are available on NARA's online Catalog. The name index is available in Record Group 92, Entry A1 2109-A, Series: Card Index to Missing Air Crew Reports. The air crew reports are available in Record Group 92, Entry A1 2109-B, Series: Missing Aircrew Reports (MACRs). Source: https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/missing-air-crew-reports

Missing Air Crew Report Example



Classification changed to RESTRICTED by E. A. Bradunas, Lt. Col., AC
by F. M. Burke, Capt., AG
Date MAR 1 1946

HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate by each Army Air Forces organization within 48 hours of the time an aircraft is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location APO # 951; Command or Air Force 7th Air Force
Group 5th Bomb Group (H); Squadron 394th Bomb Sq.(H) Detachment
2. SPECIFY: Point of Departure Bellows Field, T.H.; Course
Intended Destination; Type of Mission Hunting
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED
4. GIVE: (a) Date 10/3/42; Time 2030; and Location 80 miles So. of Diamond Head, T. H. of last known whereabouts of missing aircraft.
(b) Specify whether ( ) Last Sighted; (X) Last Contacted by Radio; ( ) Forced Down; ( ) Seen to Crash; or ( ) Information not Available.
5. AIRCRAFT WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS A RESULT OF: (Check only one) ( ) Enemy Aircraft; ( ) Enemy Anti-Aircraft; ( ) Other circumstances as Follows Mechanical difficulties
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, Model and Series B-17D; A.A.F. Serial Number 40-3089
7. ENGINES: Type, Model and Series; A.A.F. Serial Number (b); (c); (d)
8. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial Number)
(a); (b); (c); (d)
(e); (f); (g); (h)
9. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW WERE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty
or (b) Non-Battle Casualty X
10. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 9; Passengers None; Total 9
(Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars: If more than 10 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on separate sheet and attach original to this form.)

	Crew Position	Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number
K/A	1. Pilot	Birnbaum, Quentin R.	1st Lt.	O-414983
K/A	2. Copilot	Powell, John R.	2nd Lt.	O-433329
K/A	3. Bombardier	Klein, Ambrose R.	S/Sgt.	6560653
K/A	4. Engineer	Marquardt, Howard L.	S/Sgt.	6915695
K/A	5. Asst. Engineer	Peterson, Dale F.	S/Sgt.	6587388
K/A	6. Radio Operator	Barther, Raymond J.	Sgt.	11011303
K/A	7. Navigator	Alexander, William R.	Sgt.	[illegible]
K/A	8. Gunner	Jorgensen, Jack E.	Sgt.	[illegible]
K/A	9. Asst. Radio Opr	Sexton, Douglas R.	Pfc.	[illegible]
	10.			

11. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT, AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME:

Name In Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number	Contacted By Radio	Last Sighted	Saw Crash	Saw Forced Landing
1.						
2.						
3.						

12. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used; (b) Persons were seen walking away from Scene of crash; or (c) Any other reason (Specify)
13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN.
14. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.
15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE Search was made from time of disappearance until 1740 4 October 1942.

Date of Report 10/5/42

(Signature of Preparing Officer)

Location

Reason Aircraft was lost

Type of Aircraft and Serial Number

Crew Members or additional passengers.

Map of New Mexico and the Variety of Terrain

Terrain varies from the Great Plains in the east where few obstacles exist to mountains like Wheeler Peak at 13,167 feet in northern New Mexico.

US Army Air Force Bases in New Mexico during WW2

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico_World_War_II_Army_Airfields

New Mexico Army Air Bases

Kirtland Army Air Force Base – 19th Bombardment Group
B17, B24 and later B29 Aircraft https://www.kirtland.af.mil/About-Us/Kirtland-History/Base-History/

Fort Sumner Army Air Force Base – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sumner_Municipal_Airport
Used for Phase 3 pilot training on multi-engine aircraft. Later transferred for B-17 and B-24 training. Several Auxiliary airfields were nearby.

Clovis Army Air Force Base – First used as a Glider training, then assigned to the 2nd Bomber Command, later to the 16th Bombardment Wing flying B24 Liberators. Currently Cannon AFB
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannon_Air_Force_Base

Roswell Army Air Field: Flight Training and Bombardier Training schools. Also training for twin engine aircraft AT-11 Kansan https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walker_Air_Force_Base

Hobbs Army Air Field: Bombardier Training for B17 Aircraft https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hobbs_Army_Airfield

Deming AAF – Bombardier Training using the AT-11 Beechcraft Kansans for 3 years, 16th Bombardment Training Wing reassigned 1944 for the B29 aircraft. Closed 1946. Currently Deming Municipal Airport
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deming_Municipal_Airport

New Mexico Army Air Bases

Alamogordo – Multiple Designations https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holloman_Air_Force_Base

Executive Order 9029 established the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range west of Alamogordo

Neighboring military facilities were established as Alamogordo Field Training Station and the Alamogordo Army Air Base (359th Base Headquarters).

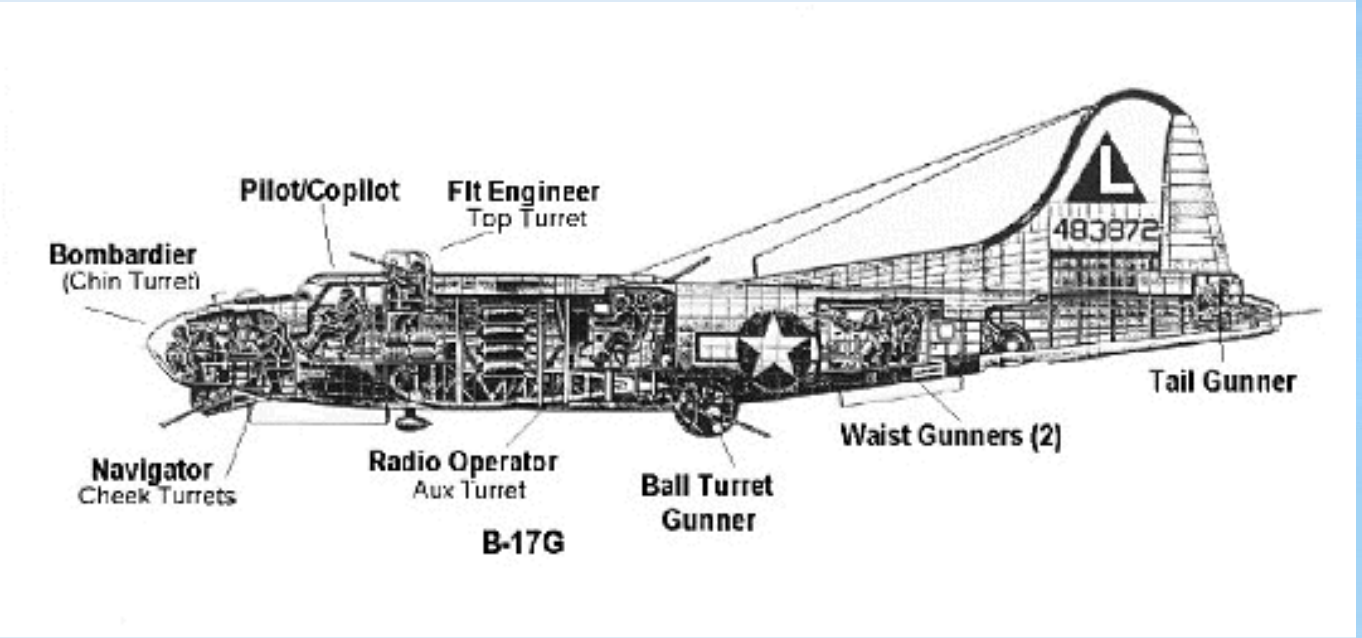
Aircraft B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberators.

Currently Holloman AFB

Carlsbad Army Air Field – 1942 became advanced (level 3) twin-engine training airfield. It began training flying cadets under the 940th Two-Engine Flying Training Detachment. It had a local axillary airfield for emergency and overflow landings. Later replaced as a bombardier school using the AT-11 Beechcraft Kansan. Currently the Cavern City Air Terminal. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cavern_City_Air_Terminal

Boeing B-17A through G Models Flying Fortress

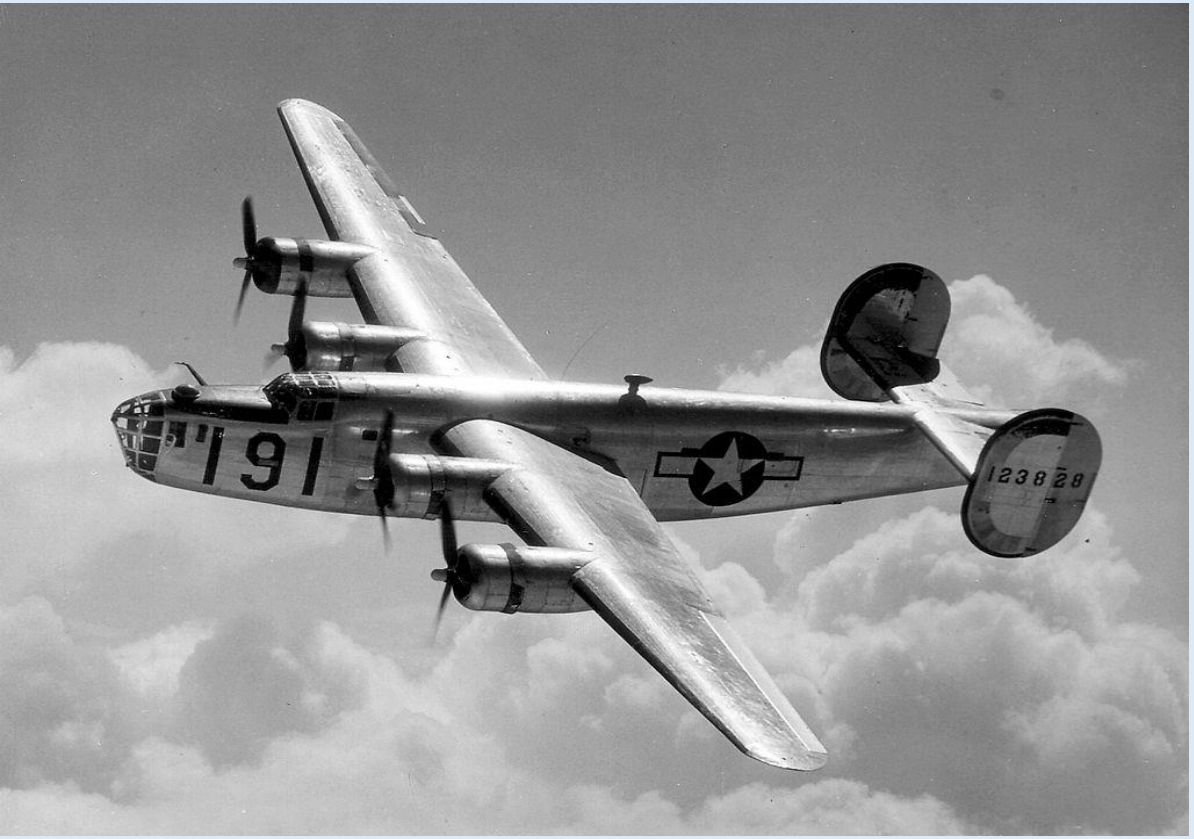
Crew of 9 to 10 personnel

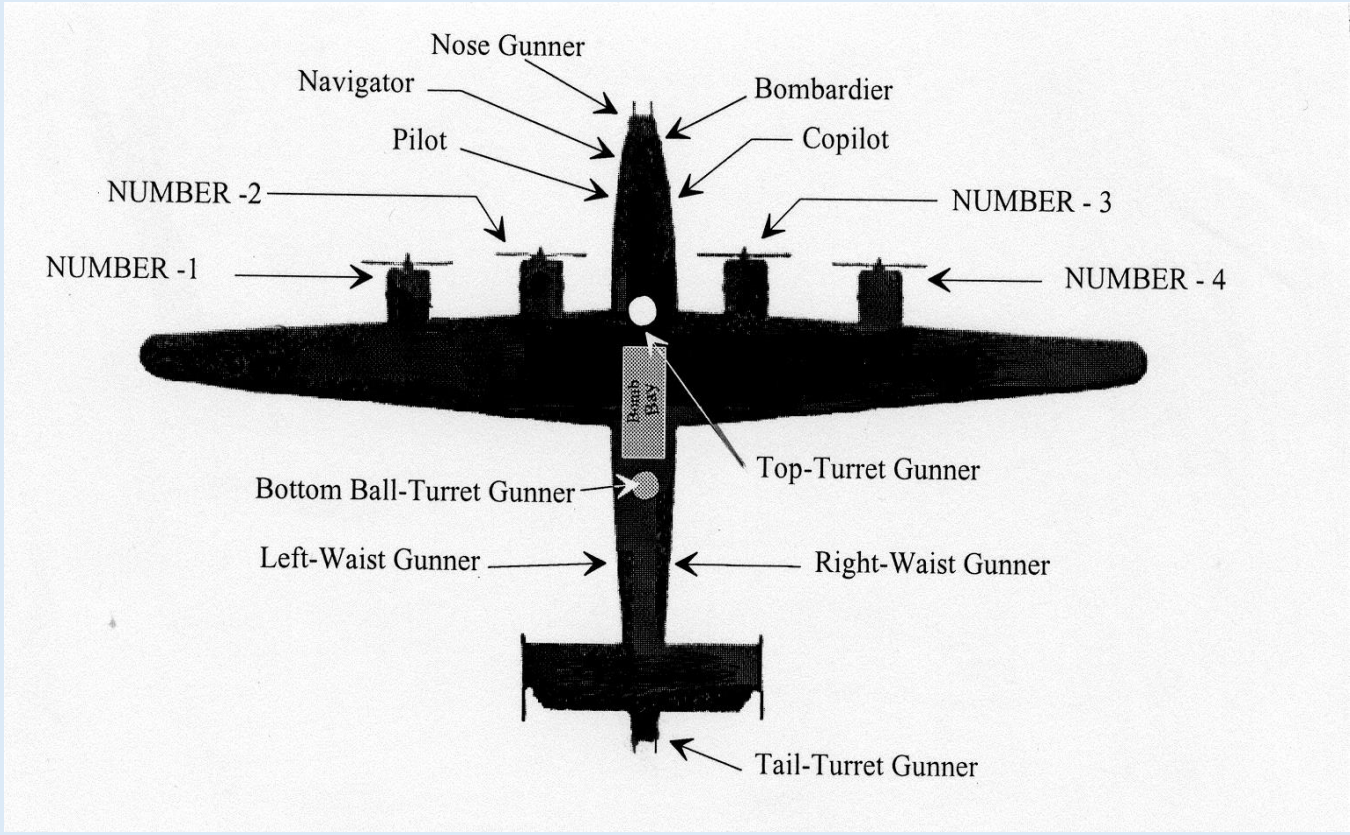


Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_B-17_Flying_Fortress

Consolidated B-24 Liberator

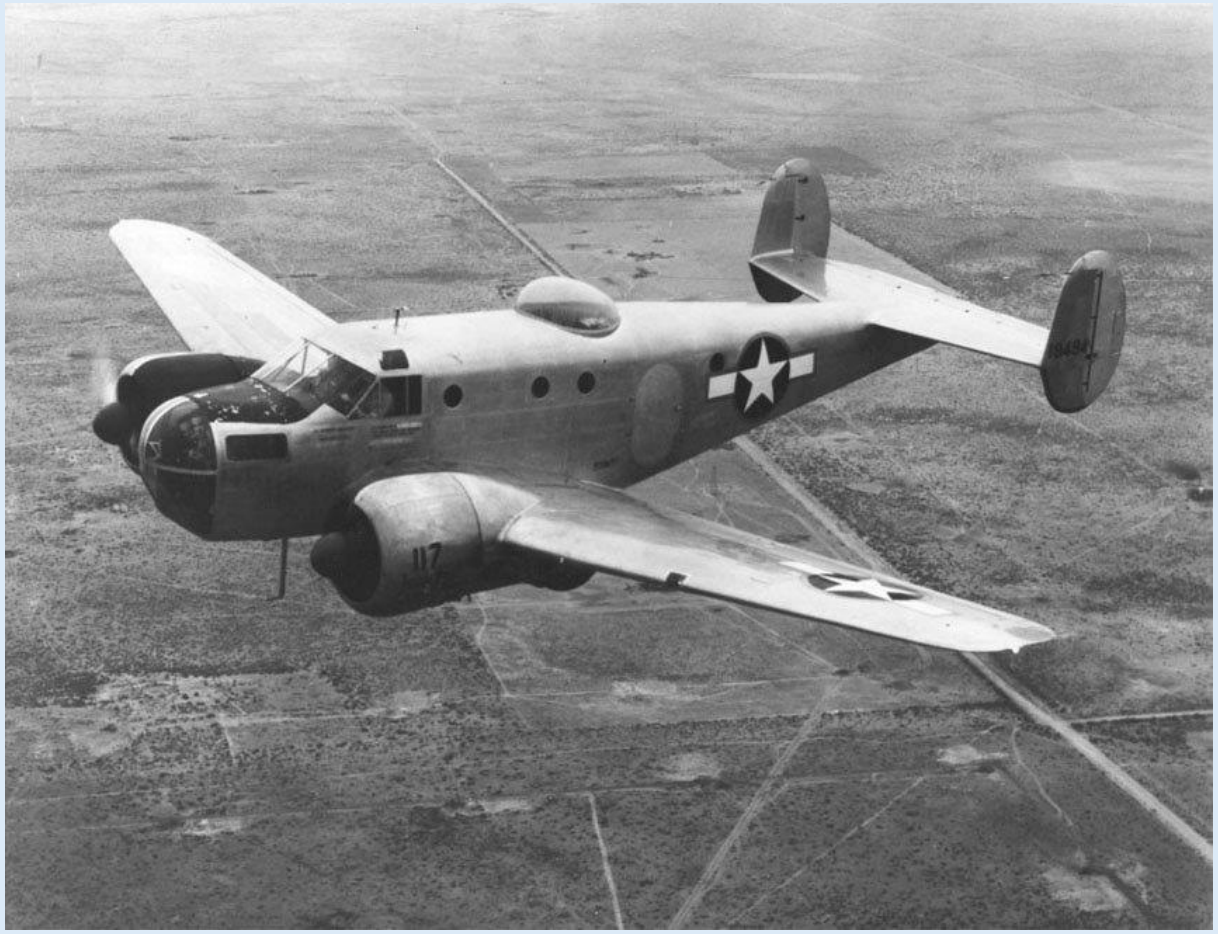
Crew of up to 10 personnel





Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_B-4_Liberator

Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan



Crew of 4: Pilot, Instructor, Two Students

Could carry up to ten one-hundred-pound M38A2 practice bombs or ten one-hundred-pound general purpose high explosive bombs. See link for detailed description of aircraft.

https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/beechcraft-11-kansan-what-made-americas-b-29-bombers-so-powerful-175453

Naval Aviation Accidents

The Army wasn't the only branch flying, but in New Mexico, there probably are not very many Naval Accident Reports.

However, the Naval History and Heritage Command maintains a list of total personnel lost. It is possible to have had Naval aircraft flying across the continental US lost to accidents.

Aviation Personnel Fatalities in World War II
https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/aviation-personnel-fatalities-in-world-war-ii.html

Aviation Accident Reports

On-line resources are plentiful:

However, to find reports directly attributed to New Mexico will require some work. Sometimes using filters “by Country” or search by “State” help narrow results.

Aviation Safety Network – database: https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/

Organized by year starting with 1902 through 2024 and by date of accident.

Example:

acc. date	type	reg.	operator	fat.	location	dmg
6 Jan 1943	Taylorcraft TG-6	42-58723	United States Army Air Force (USAAF)		Fort Sumner, NM	w/o (Written OFF)

Aviation Accident Reports

A lot of Aviation Accident Reports found for WW2 include all accidents both in the Continental US but also in Europe and the Pacific theaters. However, using filters can restrict the reports.

Example – Aviation Archeology Database - https://www.aviationarchaeology.com/dbSearchAF55.asp

USAAC/USAAF/USAF Accident Reports 1911-1955

Filtering using state: “NM”

USAAC/USAAF/USAF Accident Reports 1911-1955

Filtering using State: “NM”

SEARCH RESULTS FOR: NM /

Crash Date YYMMDD	Aircraft Type	Aircraft S/N	Squadron	Group	Home Base	Command	Action Code	Damage Code	Pilot	Country	State	Location
181210	JN-4H	AS-38257	_	_	Fort Sill, OK	_	TOA	5	Hancock, Greenville L.	USA	NM	Chapelle, NM
190731	DH-4M	AS-24278	_	_	Ft Bliss, TX	_	FLEF	3	Atwater, Frank C, Jr	USA	NM	10 mi E of Columbus, NM
280219	O-2C	25-390	_	_	Fort Bliss, TX	_	FLEF	3	Bone, Norfleet G	USA	NM	Deming, NM
290811	Lockheed-Vega	_	_	_	Clovis, NM	_	KSSPCR	5	Stephens, Orville L. (Civ)	USA	NM	Port Air, NM
300608	O-2A	25-213	42SchSq	_	Kelly Field, San Antonio, TX	_	FLW	4	Santa-Maria, Henrique	USA	NM	10 mi W of Carlsbad, NM
310204	A-3	28-115	_	_	Kelly Field, San Antonio, TX	_	FLEF	5	Donnelly, Joseph B	USA	NM	60 mi SE of Roswell, NM
370527	C-33	36-83	1ABS	_	Langley Field, Hampton, VA	_	FLEF	2	Hillery, Edward A	USA	NM	Tucumcari, NM
370527	C-33	36-78	5ABS	_	Rockwell Field, Coronado, CA	_	LAC	3	Biesiot, Peter	USA	NM	Albuguerque, NM
370930	BT-2B	31-16	AC Det	_	Oaklahoma City, OK	_	LAC	2	Mason, Charles W.	USA	NM	Wagon Mound, NM
380915	P-12E	32-42	61SchSq	_	Kelly Field, San Antonio, TX	_	KSSPCR	5	Lesser, Robert F.	USA	NM	North edge Roswell Airport, NM

Note: Aircraft did not always take off in NM but from some other airfield or airport outside NM. https://www.aviationarchaeology.com/dbSearchAF55.asp

What are Action and Damage Codes?

1. **Action Codes**: These codes provide information about the type of accident. They help classify and categorize incidents. For example, an "AA" code might indicate an accident involving a collision, while a "TOA" code could refer to an accident during takeoff.
2. **Damage Codes**: These codes indicate the severity of damage to the aircraft. Initially, the Air Force used a scale of 1 to 5 for damage assessment, but later changed it to a scale of 1 to 4.

For a partial list of Action Codes, Go here: [Abbreviations, Acronyms and Codes (aviationarchaeology.com)]

Accident-Report.com

Accident-Report.com focus on MACR data by listing the report # along with other information like date, location, pilot, aircraft, and aircraft serial number. Given this information, it is easier to find the MACR report.

This list of Missing Air Crew Reports was compiled mostly from an index created by the Army Air Forces in late 1945. The 1945 index provides the country or region of where an aircraft was observed to have been lost or where an aircraft was thought to have been lost. [1]

Example:

MACR NUMBER	DATE (YYMMDD)	PILOT	AIRCRAFT	SERIAL NUMBER	LOCATION
16441	410414	TOFT, WALTER J	AT-6	40-2102	WAIMEA BAY, HI
16383	411122	HETZEL, KARL F	P-40E	41-5296	KAHUKA POINT, HI
16024	411210	KELLY, COLIN B	B-17E	?	CLARK FIELD, PI

1. Accident-Report.com - Missing Air Crew Reports Index 1941-1942

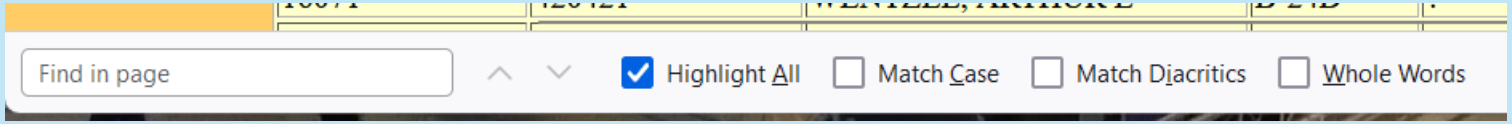
More Accident-Report.com

MACR NUMBER	DATE (YYMMDD)	PILOT	AIRCRAFT	SERIAL NUMBER	LOCATION
16441	410414	TOFT, WALTER J	AT-6	40-2102	WAIMEA BAY, HI
16383	411122	HETZEL, KARL F	P-40E	41-5296	KAHUKA POINT, HI
16024	411210	KELLY, COLIN B	B-17E	?	CLARK FIELD, PI

These reports are again from all War Theaters. Using your browser's "Find in Page' feature will help narrow your list. States are listed in two characters. Using "NM" for New Mexico will highlight all those reports in this state.

Most browsers use the "Ctrl-F" keys to bring up a search bar.

Firefox Browser Example:



MAC Reports

16138	421015	PRATT, JOHN R	B-17E	41-9161	MAGDALENA 6 MI SE, NM

The most direct way to see if a MAC Report is online is to use Google or your favorite search engine.

Searching " MACR 16138" returned various links. One of the most useful returns was this website: **B-17 Bomber Flying Fortress – The Queen Of The Skies (**https://b17flyingfortress.de/en/ **)** and contained this MACR 16138 entry and list of crew members.

MACR 16138: https://b17flyingfortress.de/en/b17/41-9161/

This accident was also recorded in the Socorro NM History PDF file available online. https://socorro-history.org/HISTORY/PH_History/200701_b17.pdf

You typically won't find a detailed article as this one describing the mission and what happened to the fate of the aircraft.

New Mexico Geological Society Annual Spring Meeting — Abstracts

A good website for some WW2 New Mexico aviation accidents is here:
https://nmgs.nmt.edu/meeting/abstracts/view.cfm?aid=2772

This PDF presentation lists the most notable accidents with pictures and good data when most accidents happened in New Mexico.
https://nmgs.nmt.edu/meeting/presentations/2021/2772/Geoarcheology%20WWII%20of%20NM%20Final.pdf

Additional Resources

National Archives has publication of Microfiche Films of MAC Reports:
https://www.archives.gov/files/research/microfilm/m1380.pdf

Fold3 contains some MACR files. Search by Aircraft Serial Number.
https://www.fold3.com/publication/95/us-missing-air-crew-reports-macrs-wwii-1942-1947/browse

Cavalcade of Wings – NM Military Crashes (not extensive, but a few)
https://www.cavalcadeofwings.com/military-crashes/

Treasure Net (More Recent 1964 to Present)
https://www.treasurenet.com/threads/aircraft-crash-locations-in-new-mexico.85129/

Aircraft Archeology (Covering the Southwest US)
https://www.aircraftarchaeology.com/

Additional Resources

The Book mentioned earlier can be found on Archive.org. **Fatal Army Air Forces aviation accidents in the United States, 1941-1945**
https://archive.org/details/fatalarmyairforc0001mire/mode/2up

Acronym KIS – Killed in Service The abbreviation **"KIS"** in the context of **Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs)** during World War II typically stands for **"Killed in Service"**. It signifies that a crew member lost their life during a mission or an aircraft incident. These brave individuals made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their country.

QUESTIONS?